

# Notes on new and rare migrants in the Cape Verde Islands

by C. J. Hazevoet

Received 29 May 1990

Little has been written on the migrant birds occurring in the Cape Verde Islands since Bannerman & Bannerman's (1968) account. The results of collecting visits by J. V. dos Santos, 1969–72, were given by Frade (1976). Observations made from ships in Cape Verde seas in 1976 were published by Lambert (1980), while Nørrevang & den Hartog (1984) and Summers-Smith (1984) reported on observations made during brief visits in 1982 and 1983 respectively. The first record of Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* in Cape Verde was published by den Hartog (1987).

During the 1980s, ornithological research and birdwatching in the islands increased considerably, there having been an almost complete lack of any in the preceding decade. Unfortunately, most results were published in private reports only or not at all. All available information, including records of several new migrants not observed by the present writer, will be included in a forthcoming British Ornithologists' Union Check-list of the Birds of the Cape Verde Islands (Hazevoet, in prep). Doubtless, the list will continue to grow as more and more ornithologists and birdwatchers visit the islands, probably showing that almost all Palaearctic migrants known from the West African mainland can be found, be it in limited numbers, in the Cape Verde Islands as well.

During 1986–90, I visited the Cape Verde Islands 5 times: twice on short visits, Feb–Mar 1986 and Dec 1987 to Jan 1988, as a tour-leader for groups of naturalists; in 1988–90, I stayed altogether 7 months in the country in connection with a programme for the development of national parks and protected areas under the auspices of the International Council for Bird Preservation and the Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agrária. All islands and most of the islets were visited, many of them several times.

Here a brief report is given of species new or unpublished for Cape Verde (marked \*) and of a number of species which are apparently more regular visitors than formerly supposed. During my visits, I recorded 9 species new for Cape Verde. One of these, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, has already been reported elsewhere (Hazevoet 1988). Through the courtesy of several other observers some of their unpublished records have been included here. Unless stated otherwise, all observations are by the author.

The Cape Verde Islands are situated c. 500 km west of Sénégal. There are 9 inhabited main islands and several smaller islands and islets. Because of the almost complete lack of surface water, large concentrations of migrant waders, so prominent along West African coasts, are rare and found only at a few lagoons and salt-pans. The migrant landbirds reported here were nearly always encountered in the more flat, desert-like eastern islands, probably not only because these are nearer to the mainland but also because small passerines can be more easily found there as

they concentrate in bushes and oases. In the highly mountainous western islands, small migrant birds, if they occur there at all, are hard to locate.

## LIST OF SPECIES

### INTERMEDIATE EGRET *Egretta intermedia*

One was present at the lagoon near Pedra Badejo, Santiago, on 9 May 1989. First recorded 11 Jan 1965, when one was collected at the same lagoon (de Naurois 1965, R. de Naurois). J. V. dos Santos collected 4 on Santo Antão on 27 Oct, 10 and 13 Nov 1972 (Frade 1976). On Sal, 4 were seen at Santa Maria on 20 Mar 1983, and one at Pedra Lume on 21 Mar 1983 (G.-M. Heinze). Apparently, *E. intermedia* visits the islands regularly in small numbers, being one of the few Afrotropical species to do so. In Africa it is resident south of the Sahara, but some local movements are known and it is possibly migratory (Brown *et al.* 1982). The species has increased its range and abundance in West Africa since the 1950s (Macdonald 1978).

### SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

Observed several times 1988–90, almost exclusively at 2 locations. At the Pedra Badejo lagoon on Santiago, 8 were present on 9 Nov 1988, 4 on 9 May 1989 and a single bird on 10 Apr 1990. Previously seen there in Feb and Apr 1963, in Jan 1965 (de Naurois 1965, R. de Naurois) and in Feb 1966 (Bannerman & Bannerman 1968). On Boavista, at the Rabil lagoon, 5–6 were observed 17–23 Sep 1988, and singles on 19 May 1989 and 19 Mar 1990. The birds in Sep 1988 had been present already some weeks prior to the above dates (M. Heinze). At the same location, it had been observed in Apr 1963 (de Naurois 1965, R. de Naurois). There are only 2 records from other locations: a bird in poor condition was seen near Tarrafal, Santiago, on 16 Jan 1986 (C. J. Camphuysen), and the author saw one along the coast some kilometres east of Curral Velho, Boavista, on 20 Sep 1988, perhaps one of the group seen at the Rabil lagoon.

From the above data it can be concluded that the species is a regular (possibly yearly) visitor in small numbers, but almost completely restricted to the 2 mentioned lagoons, which are about the only suitable localities in Cape Verde. The largest group-size noted so far was 10–12 in Jan 1965 (R. de Naurois). In West Africa, the nominate race is an uncommon winter visitor south to the northern tropics; non-breeding birds from Mauritania (*P. l. balsaci*) disperse south to Sénégal and Guinea-Bissau (Brown *et al.* 1982). Although the Spoonbills occurring in Cape Verde are probably migrants from Europe, the possibility that birds from Mauritania are involved cannot be ruled out completely.

### \*MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

On 1 Mar 1986, an adult female was observed on Raso. On Boavista, the species was seen on 3 occasions: an adult female at the Rabil lagoon on 18 Sep 1988 and an adult female west of Curral Velho on 20 Sep 1988 may have been the same individual; on 19 Mar 1990, an immature was seen north of Curral Velho. Two previous records: on 21 Mar 1983, 2 adult males were present at the salt-pans at Pedra Lume on Sal (G.-M. Heinze), and a female or immature was seen on Raso on 8 Feb 1985 (S. C. Madge).

The species seems to be a regular visitor to Cape Verde in small numbers. It is a widespread winter visitor to tropical Africa (Brown *et al.* 1982).

**COLLARED PRATINCOLE** *Glareola pratincola*

One was seen at Calheta, Maio, on 27 May 1989. Two previous records: a female collected by L. Fea at Pedra Badejo (presumably at the lagoon), Santiago, on 29 Apr 1898 (Salvadori 1899), and a female collected by J. V. dos Santos on Santiago (no precise location given) on 20 Sep 1969 (Frade 1976). Another was listed by Bourne (1955) as being collected by the Blossom expedition in 1924, but this is an error and referred in fact to a Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (cf Rhoades 1952). In West Africa, *G. p. pratincola* is a locally abundant to rare winter visitor mainly along the southern edge of the Sahara; resident *G. p. fuelleborni* is nomadic with considerable movements, but without a clear pattern (Urban *et al.* 1986). The subspecies are not separable in the field.

**KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

A locally abundant winter visitor to West African coasts (Urban *et al.* 1986), the species is surprisingly rare in Cape Verde. On 9 Nov 1988, one was observed at the lagoon near Pedra Badejo, Santiago. On previous days heavy showers had fallen and the lagoon was well filled with water, prompting many waders to visit the site. The only previous mention of Knot was by Alexander (1898) who listed it as observed in salt-pans on Maio on 20 Nov 1897, but did not record the number seen.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica*

Reported from São Vicente in Oct 1983 by Summers-Smith (1984), who thought it to be unrecorded previously. However, Frade (1976) listed 2 specimens collected in Nov 1969 and Dec 1972 on Santiago and São Vicente respectively. During the last decade, it has been recorded by several other observers (including the author) and it appears to be a regular winter visitor in small numbers, usually along the shore or at salt-pans. There are now 11 records (Oct–Feb) from Santiago, Fogo, São Vicente, Sal, Boavista and Maio. In West Africa, it is a frequent to abundant winter visitor to the Atlantic coasts (Urban *et al.* 1986).

**\*SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus*

On 9 Nov 1988, one was present at the lagoon near Pedra Badejo, Santiago, on the same occasion as the Knot listed above. Not recorded previously. In West Africa, the species is an uncommon to locally abundant winter visitor to inland marshes, floodland and coastal salt-pans (Urban *et al.* 1986).

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ridibundus*

First reported from the Cape Verde Islands on 30 Dec 1923, when 2 were collected by the Blossom expedition at Mindelo, São Vicente (Rhoades 1952). Only in Oct 1983 was it reported again, when one was observed by Summers-Smith (1984), also at Mindelo. Observations have increased considerably since and there are now c. 15 records from Santiago, Fogo, São Vicente, Sal and Boavista, as well as in Cape Verde seas, mostly of singles but parties of up to 10 have been reported, all

between Sep–Mar. In West Africa, it is a common coastal winter visitor to Mauritania, but uncommon further south (Urban *et al.* 1986).

**\*SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

On 12 Mar 1990, one was seen at sea off Tarrafal, São Nicolau. Not mentioned in the literature, it had previously been recorded from Santiago, São Nicolau and Maio in Dec 1986 and Jan 1987 (D. de Bruijn) and at sea off Santo Antão, Sal and Boavista in Dec 1988 and Jan 1989 (K. Morgan). Furthermore, there is a ringing recovery “pre 1970” (further details lacking at present) of a bird ringed in UK (Tauraco AFRING Data Bank). Presumably, the species is regularly present in Cape Verde seas in small numbers during winter. In West Africa, it is a common winter visitor to the Atlantic seaboard (Urban *et al.* 1986).

**\*LITTLE TERN** *Sterna albifrons*

On 19 Mar 1990, one was foraging along the shore south of Sal Rei, Boavista, while 4 were resting at the Rabil lagoon. The following day 6 were present at the lagoon. The only previous record was of one observed on Maio on 7 Oct 1988 (J. P. Ledant). In West Africa, the species is a common coastal passage migrant and winter visitor; it breeds in Mauritania and Senegambia, but movements of tropical breeders are little known (Urban *et al.* 1986).

**TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur*

On 30 August 1988, one was seen at Palmeira, Sal, and on 17 Sep 1988, 2 were present in the dunes along the Rabil lagoon, Boavista. One was observed at Achada São Filipe, Santiago, on 23 Sep 1988 (J. P. Ledant). Three previous published records: 2 were seen in a central valley on São Vicente on 23 Sep 1951 (Bourne 1955, W. R. P. Bourne); one at Mindelo, also on São Vicente, on 6 Oct 1983 (Summers-Smith 1984); and one flying around a ship north of Maio (landsight) on 6 Oct 1976 (Lambert 1980). The species appears to be a regular passage migrant in autumn. In West Africa, it is a common passage migrant and locally abundant winter visitor in the Sahelian zone (Urban *et al.* 1986).

**\*SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus*

On 13 Mar 1990, one was seen hunting on Raso. Previously, only a wing of this species had been found, near Santa Maria, Sal, on 23 Feb 1983 (G.-M. Heinze). In West Africa, winter visitors cross the Sahara in small numbers which probably vary annually (Cramp *et al.* 1985).

**\*TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

One was observed in bushes at the oasis near Curral Velho, Boavista, on 20 Sep 1988. Not recorded before. An abundant winter visitor to West Africa eastwards from the Guinea coast at 10°N, mainly on passage in Sénégal (Cramp *et al.* 1988, Morel 1972).

**\*YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*

A bird in winter plumage was foraging in *Zygophyllum-Cistanche* vegetation growing near the overflow of a sewage-installation near Santa Maria, Sal, on 25 Nov 1988. On 13 and 14 Mar 1990, one was present on Raso, foraging at tidal pools on the rocky shore. Not recorded previously.

A common winter visitor in West Africa south of the Sahara and very common in Sénégal (Moreau 1972, Morel 1972).

**\*NIGHTINGALE** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

One was present at the oasis near Curral Velho, Boavista, on 20 and 21 Sep 1988. Not recorded before. In West Africa, a winter visitor south of the Sahara, mostly north of the equator, and common in Sénégal (Moreau 1972, Morel 1972).

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Apparently a regular winter visitor in small numbers. Two were observed south of Fonte Vicente, Boavista, on 26 Dec 1987, and a single bird was seen in the same area on 19 Mar 1990. One was present on Raso on 9 Mar 1985 (P. & J. Hall). In 1987, one was seen at Ponta Preta, Maio, on 8 Jan, and another near Barril, São Nicolau, on 27 Jan (D. de Bruijn). Only 2 previous records: 2 seen, of which one was collected, on Maio, on 22 Nov 1897 (Alexander 1898); one was collected by the Blossom expedition at Preguiça, São Nicolau, on 28 Feb 1924 (Rhoades 1952). The 2 collected birds were both *O. o. leucorhoa*. In West Africa, it winters in a broad belt south of the Sahara; both *O. o. oenanthe* and *O. o. leucorhoa* are common in winter and on passage in Sénégal (Cramp *et al.* 1988, Morel 1972).

**\*OLIVACEOUS WARBLER** *Hippolais pallida*

On 19 and 20 Sep 1988, one was observed at the oasis near curral Velho, Boavista. Not recorded before. A locally numerous winter visitor in West Africa from Sénégal to Nigeria (Moreau 1972, Morel 1972).

**\*SUBALPINE WARBLER** *Sylvia cantillans*

A male was seen in low vegetation near the cliffs on Raso on 14 Mar 1990, and another male in bushes along the Rabil lagoon, Boavista, on 19 Mar 1990. Not reported previously. A widespread winter visitor in West Africa, common in Sénégal (Moreau 1972, Morel 1972).

**\*WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

From 19 to 22 Sep 1988, at least 10 birds were observed in trees and bushes at 3 locations on Boavista (Fonte Vicente, Curral Velho, Porto Ferreira). One was seen at Juncalinho, São Nicolau, on 17 Mar 1990. Not reported previously, but probably occurs regularly in small numbers on migration. A common winter visitor in West Africa south of 11°N, in Sénégal mainly on passage (Moreau 1972, Morel 1972).

**\*SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

A single bird was present in bushes near Porto Ferreira, Boavista, on 21 Sep 1988. No previous reports. A common winter visitor in West Africa south of 7°N, in Sénégal mainly on passage (Moreau 1972, Morel 1972).

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Singles were observed on Boavista in 1988 at Fonte Vicente (19 Sep), Curral Velho (20 Sep) and at Porto Ferreira (22 Sep). The only record previously was of one collected by F. Newton c. 1900 (Bocage 1902), which was overlooked by Bannerman & Bannerman (1968). A common

winter visitor in West Africa from 11°N to the equator, in Sénégal mainly on passage with some wintering in the south (Moreau 1972, Morel 1972).

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Deirdre de Bruijn, Kees Camphuysen, Pam and John Hall, Gerd-Michael Heinze, Mathias Heinze, Jean-Paul Ledant, Steve Madge and Kevin Morgan for providing me with their unpublished records. Bill Bourne and René de Naurois supplied additional information on their published records. My first 2 journeys to Cape Verde were made aboard the SV *Sirius* and the MV *Plancius*. During 1988–90, my work was supported by the International Council for Bird Preservation (Netherlands section), the Netherlands Foundation for International Nature Protection (van Tienhoven Stichting), the J. C. van der Huchtfonds, the Martina de Beukelaarstichting, the Netherlands Society for the Protection of Birds (Vogelbescherming), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (NMF). In Cape Verde, working facilities were provided by the Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agrária and the Ministry of Rural Development and Fisheries. René Dekker and Jan Wattel commented on a draft of this note.

### References:

- Alexander, B. 1898. Further notes on the ornithology of the Cape Verde islands. *Ibis* Ser. 7(4): 277–285.
- Bannerman, D. A. & Bannerman, W. M. 1968. *History of the Birds of the Cape Verde Islands. Birds of the Atlantic Islands*. Vol. 4. Oliver & Boyd.
- Bocage, J. V. B. du 1902. Aves e reptis de Cabo Verde. *J. Sc. Math. Phys. Nat.* (Lisbon) Ser. 2(6): 206–210.
- Bourne, W. R. P. 1955. The birds of the Cape Verde Islands. *Ibis* 97: 508–556.
- Brown, L. H., Urban, E. K. & Newman, K. 1982. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 1. Academic Press.
- Crap, S. *et al.* 1985, 1988. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Vols. 4, 5. Oxford University Press.
- Frade, F. 1976. Aves do arquipélago de Cabo Verde (Colecção do Centro de Zoologica da JICU). *Garcia de Orta* (Sér. Zool.) 5: 47–58.
- Hartog, J. C. den 1987. A record of a Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* (L.) from the Cape Verde Islands, with a review of the status of this species in the South Atlantic Ocean. *Zool. Meded.* (Leiden) 61(28): 405–419.
- Hazevoet, C. J. 1988. Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, new to the Cape Verde Islands. *Malimbus* 10: 221–222.
- Hazevoet, C. J. (in prep). *Check-list of the Birds of the Cape Verde Islands*. British Ornithologists' Union.
- Lambert, K. 1980. Beiträge zur Vogelwelt der Kapverdischen Inseln. *Beitr. Vogelk.* 26: 1–18.
- Macdonald, M. A. 1978. The Yellow-billed Egret in West Africa (Aves: Ardeidae). *Rev. Zool. Afr.* 92: 191–200.
- Moreau, R. E. 1972. *The Palaearctic–African Bird Migration Systems*. Academic Press.
- Morel, G. J. 1972. *Liste commentée des oiseaux du Sénégal et de la Gambie*. ORSTOM, Dakar.
- Naurois, R. de 1965. Faits nouveaux concernant le peuplement avien de l'Archipel du Cap-Vert. *C.R. Acad. Sci. Paris* 260: 5911–5914.
- Nørrevang, A. & den Hartog, J. C. 1984. Bird observations in the Cape Verde Islands (4–22 June 1982). *Cour. Forsch.-Inst. Senckenberg* 68: 107–134.
- Rhoades, R. 1952. *A list of birds from the Cape Verde Islands Collected by the Blossom South Atlantic Expedition and Catalogued in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History*. Unpublished typescript. 35 pp.
- Salvadori, T. 1899. Collezioni ornitologiche fatte nelle Isole del Capo Verde da Leonardo Fea. *Ann. Mus. Civ. St. Nat.* (Genova) Ser. 2(20): 283–312.
- Summers-Smith, J. D. 1984. Bird notes from the Cape Verde Islands. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 104: 148–149.
- Urban, E. K., Fry, C. H. & Keith, S. 1986. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 2. Academic Press.

*Address*: C. J. Hazevoet, Institute of Taxonomic Zoology (Zoological Museum), PO Box 4766, 1009 AT Amsterdam, The Netherlands.